



CITY OF NEW CARROLLTON

6016 PRINCESS GARDEN PARKWAY, NEW CARROLLTON, MARYLAND 20784

Phone (301) 459-6100

Fax (301) 459-8172

October 12, 2020

Ms. Lisa B. Choplin, DBIA,
Director
Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
I-495 & I-270 P3 Office
707 North Calvert Street
Mail Stop P-601
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

RE: The I-495 & I-270 Managed Lane Study – Draft Environmental Impact Statement
and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Managed Lane Study

Dear Ms. Choplin:

The Maryland Department of Transportation's plan to widen I-495, the Capital Beltway, is ill-advised and will have a deleterious impact on the City of New Carrollton, as explained below. The City of New Carrollton opposes the Beltway widening project and takes issue with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS") and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Managed Lane Study. Although the DEIS analyzes seven possible alternatives for the project, the only acceptable option proposed is the no build option.

The proposed Beltway expansion will, depending on the alternative selected:

- result in the loss of a significant amount of parkland, ranging from 144.7 to 149 acres;
- eliminate or significantly reduce the buffer between the Capital Beltway and existing homes located proximate to the Beltway, creating an increased level of traffic noise for residents in those homes, thereby ruining the peaceful enjoyment of their properties;
- incur a cost of construction in the neighborhood of \$9 billion to \$12 billion, including an estimate of \$2 billion for WSSC water and stormwater abatement, which may result in exorbitant tolls that creates a situation where people will not be able to afford to use the newly created lanes (the DEIS mentions that the average daily toll rates would range between \$0.68/mile to \$0.77/mile). Furthermore, the

- DEIS shows that there may be a need for a State subsidy in the amount of \$482 to \$1,088 million;
- increase air pollution;
- impact wetlands, possibly over 16 acres of wetlands;
- result in a tremendous loss of tree canopy; and
- contribute adversely to climate change.

The DEIS analyzes seven possible alternatives considered for the project, one of which is a no build option, although it is recognized that the no build option does not achieve the goal of the Study. The acquisition of properties in the City for this project is expected to be 5.3 acres¹. The DEIS identifies eight public park property owners along the study corridor that will be impacted, including the City of New Carrollton. The City's Beckett Field will be impacted by a taking of 0.2 acres for all of the alternatives, other than the no build. The DEIS shows that the northeast portion of the City of New Carrollton will be directly affected by the project.

Furthermore, there will be significant disruptions to traffic along the Capital Beltway during construction. Cars trying to avoid the construction related congestion may exit 495 onto roads within the City, such as Md. Route 450, and roads near the City, Md. Routes 193 or 201, which could result in additional traffic driving through our City. And, the environmental and social impacts will be everlasting, with potential stormwater runoff issues, reduction in trees, parks and green space, homes being destroyed and/or yards decreased, to name a few.

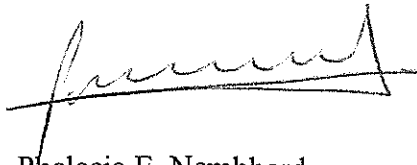
It is imperative that the State and the DEIS not only seriously consider alternative ways to relieve congestion on the Capital Beltway, but also further explore the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the way that businesses, schools, colleges, and governments operate. Although the DEIS recognizes the COVID-19 pandemic and the "uncertainty surrounding post-shutdown traffic levels and transit use," it fails to offer a traffic model that predicts how the pandemic will affect long-term future traffic projections and transit use. Many businesses have stated that they may not return to the traditional business model, which means allowing employees to telework resulting in a decrease in vehicles on the highway. This step is an absolute must as the selection of the action/alternative to be taken requires consideration of "all practicable means to avoid, minimize or mitigate environmental harm."

¹ The Overview of Potential Impacts by CEA Analysis Area Community as Summarized from the Community Profiles.

Ms. Lisa B. Choplin, DBIA, Director
Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
October 12, 2020

Since the next step is the development of a Final Environmental Impact Statement identifying the preferred alternative, it is important that all comments be fairly considered, including those in opposition to the project. Given the potential tremendous negative impact of the Beltway expansion project, and the lack of proof that any of the proposed alternatives will reduce traffic congestion, one can only conclude that the no build option is the only option. The City of New Carrollton vehemently opposes the widening of the Beltway as proposed and evaluated in the DEIS. **The Mayor and the City Council of New Carrollton unanimously supports the no build option.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phelecia E. Nembhard', written over a horizontal line.

Phelecia E. Nembhard
Mayor
City of New Carrollton

